

THE JULY MAGAZINES.

"THE GALAXY." The July number of The Galaxy has the following list of articles:—"A Leap in the Dark," by Edward H. House; "American Women and English Women," by Justin McCarthy; "Summer Rain," by E. R. Sill; "Lo-Land Adventure," by Albert S. Evans; "A Problem," by Louise Chandler Moulter; "Gleanings from the Sea," by John C. Draper; "Cohomed," by M. L. R.; "Museums of Art, Artists, and Amateurs in America," by J. Jackson Jarves; "So Dearly Bought," by Frank Lee Benedict; "Poppies," by Rose Terry; "Put Yourself in his Place," by Charles Reade, chapter XLV to end (with an illustration); "A Sign," by J. W. De Forest; "The New Lamps of History," a lecture delivered before the University of California, by William Swinton; "Mr. Welles in Answer to Mr. Weed—The Facts of the Abandonment of Gosport Navy Yard," by Gideon Welles; "Drift-Wood," by Philip Quilibet; "Literature and Art;" "Memoranda," by Mark Twain; "Nebula," by the Editor.

As the reply of that eminent mariner, ex-Secretary of the Navy Welles, to Thurlow Weed, is of considerable interest, and spicy wit, we give it entire:—

MR. WELLES IN ANSWER TO MR. WEED. THE FACTS OF THE ABANDONMENT OF GOSPORT NAVY YARD.

In the Galaxy for June there was published a chapter from the autobiography of Mr. Thurlow Weed, which contains, with a vast amount of egotism, some facts perverted, and no little fiction. The author has a very fertile recollection, a prodigiously prolific memory, and in his conceits and details he remembers, and relates with a minuteness that is wonderful, events that never took place, or which occurred under circumstances widely different from his narration of them.

This chapter of the autobiography commences with an account of two visits which were made to Washington in March and April, 1861—an interesting period of our history. Mr. Weed describes not only his observations, but the vigilant supervision which he exercised over the Government, and the admonitions, promptings, and instructions which he kindly administered to the President and various Departments. It is pleasant to read the incidents he relates. It is still more pleasant to witness the self-satisfied complacency and the modest, and unaffected self-confidence which crop out in almost every sentence. That the autobiographer was as officious and intrusive as he states, perhaps without any intention of being impertinent, is altogether probable. Unfortunately for the accuracy of his memory and the truthfulness of his statements, many of his reminiscences are inconsistent with facts. The two opening paragraphs will bear republication. Mr. Weed says:—

The first and only inauguration of a President I ever attended. It was the inauguration of Lincoln, which designs upon his life while on his way from Springfield to Washington were providentially averted. It was also known that the question of seceding upon the Government had been contemplated. The few troops in Washington were therefore stationed around the Capitol. During the ceremony I had the honor to be in the grounds, encountering Major-General Wool, with a detachment of United States troops ready for action, and two pieces of cannon posted so as to take an important avenue. I soon after found Lieutenant-General Scott, with the same number of cannon (on one of which the veteran was resting his elbow), posted in an equally advantageous position in a country so long exempted from serious internal collisions, occasioned painful reflections. General Scott assured me that these precautions were necessary, and that they had not been taken a moment too early. All, however, passed without either an attack or an alarm. But I was not long before unequal symptoms of rebellion were manifested. When in Washington a few days afterwards I was awakened early one morning by Horace H. Riddell, formerly a resident of the city, and now of Albany county, N. Y., but then living at Harper's Ferry, who informed me that unless immediately reinforced the arsenal and the necessary stores would be attacked and taken by enemies of the Government, who were banding together for that purpose; adding that he was not at all to lose it, and that he would immediately return to Washington. He thought the danger could not be so imminent, but said that the subject should have immediate attention from the President and the War Department, who promptly said that my information was satisfactory of that which he had received from the arsenal, and that he would do "what can I do? My effective force, all told, for the defense of the capital, is twenty-one hundred. Washington is as much in danger as Harper's Ferry. I shall report my information to the President, and cannot hazard the capital of the Union, as I should by dividing my force, even to save Harper's Ferry." My friend Riddell, as he did immediately. The next day brought us intelligence of the loss of Harper's Ferry.

Soon after this, our first taste of rebellion, I received information from an equally reliable source that Gosport, with its vast supply of munitions of war, was in danger. Of this I informed the Secretary of the Navy at the breakfast table at Willard's Hotel. Believing from his manner that he attached but little importance to my information, I reiterated it with emphasis, and insisted that it would be a serious loss if Gosport were not immediately strengthened. Meeting the Secretary at dinner the same day, I renewed the conversation, and was informed the matter would be attended to. This did not quiet my solicitude, and leaving the Secretary to the placid enjoyment of his dinner, I repaired to the White House. Mr. Lincoln, however, had not time to visit some fortifications. I made another attempt in the evening to see him, but he was again occupied. Early the next day, however, I found him and informed him what I had heard of the danger that threatened Gosport, and how, as I feared, I had failed to impress the Secretary of the Navy with the accuracy of my information, or the necessity of immediate action. "Well," said Mr. Lincoln, "we can't afford to lose all those cannon; I'll go and see Father Welles myself," as he did immediately. The result was that Admiral Paulding, who was then detached to Norfolk, arrived just in time to enjoy an illumination occasioned by the burning of Government property, and witness the capture of Gosport.

I do not affect to misunderstand the scope and purpose of the allusions to myself, nor the impressions which the autobiographer seeks to convey. They are in character and keeping with years of misrepresentation in relation to the abandonment of the navy yard at Norfolk, and other events by which the administration of the Navy Department was for years maligned and wronged. This detraction and these slanders, covertly made, I wasted no time to correct, when employed in duties which demanded all my attention. Nor should I now notice them but for certain associations of the autobiographer, nor have given them a thought if they had been repeated by an anonymous defamer. Time and truth will dissipate the errors which have been industriously and insidiously sown—some of which pervade the pages of what purport to be histories of the civil war and the two last administrations of the United States.

Dates are important in developing history, and are sometimes essential to verify statements and facts. The arsenal and armory at Harper's Ferry were destroyed and the place was abandoned on the evening of the 18th of April, 1861. The navy yard at Norfolk, as it is familiarly called, but, correctly speaking, Gosport, was abandoned on the night of the 20th.

Commodore Paulding testified before the Congressional Committee, who inquired into and reported upon the subject of "the destruction of the property of the United States at the navy yard in Norfolk, and the armory at Harper's Ferry," as follows:—

1861. Under verbal orders of the Secretary of the Navy I left the Navy Department that evening and arrived at Norfolk the following afternoon, conveying dispatches to Commodore McCauley, and with directions from the Secretary of the Navy to convey to him and Commodore Pendergrast with reference to the safety of the public property at the Norfolk Navy Yard. I performed that duty, and left Norfolk in the Baltimore boat on the afternoon of the 17th of April.

He further testifies that he returned and reported to me, and that immediately after, on the afternoon of April 18, I received from the Secretary of the Navy instructions to proceed to Norfolk with the Pawnee. I left Washington on the evening of the 18th of April in the Pawnee, and arrived at Fortress Monroe on the following day at about 4 o'clock.

Mr. Weed says, after his friend Riddell awakened him early one morning:—"The next day brought us intelligence of the loss of Harper's Ferry, our first taste of rebellion. I received information from an equally reliable source that Gosport, with its vast supply of munitions of war, was in danger. Of this I informed the Secretary of the Navy at the breakfast table at Willard's Hotel. Believing from his manner that he attached but little importance to my information, I reiterated it with emphasis, and insisted that it would be a serious loss if Gosport were not immediately strengthened. Meeting the Secretary at dinner the same day, I renewed the conversation, and was informed the matter would be attended to. This did not quiet my solicitude, and leaving the Secretary to the placid enjoyment of his dinner, I repaired to the White House. Mr. Lincoln, however, had not time to visit some fortifications. I made another attempt in the evening to see him, but he was again occupied. Early the next day, however, I found him and informed him what I had heard of the danger that threatened Gosport, and how, as I feared, I had failed to impress the Secretary of the Navy with the accuracy of my information, or the necessity of immediate action."

This interview, if it ever took place, of which, however, I have no recollection, must have been on the morning of the 19th, succeeding the abandonment of Harper's Ferry, which was on the 18th of April. When, therefore, Mr. Weed came to me with "reliable information," which was no news to me, whatever it may have been, it was, in my manner, did not indicate excitement or sensational alarm. I heard his story, and its reiteration with emphasis, calmly and, I trust, respectfully, for I knew, what he did not know, that Commodore Paulding had at that moment my orders in his pocket, directing him to proceed to Norfolk, investing him with full power to protect the public property, and that he had been and was then collecting his forces to proceed as soon as his vessel and men could be got ready for the service.

These facts I did not communicate to Mr. Weed, though he had given me what information he possessed. The President, on whom Mr. Weed represents he called with his information, was cognizant of these facts, and appears to have been equally uncommunicative, and, in order to rid himself of an inquisitive and perhaps troublesome gentleman who had no information to impart, dismissed him with the remark that he would see me. In point of fact, the President and myself had been two or three times in consultation the preceding day—one a very lengthy interview with General Scott, on the subject of the danger and defenses of Norfolk Navy Yard. These frequent interviews were necessary in consequence of the avalanche of duties and difficulties that were precipitated upon us in that eventful week, which commenced with the fall of Sumter and the issuing of the proclamation calling for troops; but was especially necessary on the 15th, from the fact that Chief Engineer Isherwood had arrived on the morning of that day, and reported the strange and unaccountable conduct of Commodore McCauley, and the unfortunate condition of the navy yard under his management.

Mr. Weed says he "repaired to the White House" after seeing me. Mr. Lincoln, however, had driven out to visit some fortifications. There were, unfortunately for the autobiographer, no fortifications about Washington at that time for me to drive out to. Mr. Weed remembers that he had such an unhappy infirmity with which he is sadly afflicted. As the President was "out," he called, "early the next morning," the 20th, "stated the danger that threatened Gosport, and how, as I feared, I had failed to impress the Secretary of the Navy with the accuracy of my information, or the necessity of immediate action." Commodore Paulding quietly left Washington in the Pawnee on the evening of the 19th, and was well on his way to Norfolk when this interview with the President purporting to have taken place, and in which the President was at that time aware of this fact, but he was fully conversant with all of the attending circumstances, at the same time knowing that special injunctions were imposed to give no publicity to the movement. He must have been amused when Mr. Weed related his interview with me, my manner, and his fears that he had failed to impress me. The President on his part was as reticent as myself; but allowed the author of the autobiography to cheer himself with the belief that he had impressed the President, if he had failed with the Secretary of the Navy, by all those cannon, and he would "see Father Welles."

The appellation "Father Welles" was at a later period often applied to me by naval officers, sailors, and others, but not at that early period of the administration, and never, that I am aware of, by President Lincoln. Nor would he then, or at any time, be likely to use the expression as regards myself, when three of the members of the Cabinet—Messrs. Bates, Cameron, and Seward—were my seniors. The term was sometimes kindly and affectionately applied by him to Attorney-General Bates, the eldest of his political family, for whom he had a tender regard. The remark which is quoted in the autobiography may have been made by the President; but it is more likely to be the offspring of that prolific and fertile memory to which I have adverted, which could recollect details that never took place, and manufacture facts with facility for any emergency.

Mr. Riddell may have awakened Mr. Weed "early one morning," and he may have gone immediately to Secretary Cameron with tidings that Harper's Ferry was in danger; but no so doing, as he could not have had no more information than when he told the Secretary of the Navy that Gosport was in danger. Mr. Cameron, like the Secretary of the Navy, was not as much excited as Mr. Weed expected he would be. He therefore went to General Scott, who "promptly said that which he had received the previous evening." Each of the Secretaries might with truth have given him the same answer as General Scott, for he told them nothing new. The truth is, the Government had other, earlier, and more authentic sources of information than Mr. Weed. The information which the departments received did not always come through him, strange as it may seem to him, and to those who read and credit the pages of his

autobiography. Despatches sometimes reached the Secretaries direct, without passing under his inspection, or through his hands, and there were, as he well knows, departments of the Government which never made him their confidant. I do not question that he was as active, as busy, as officious, and as intrusive as he describes; but he was of vastly less consequence than his imagination led him to suppose. In the matter of the autobiography, the allowance must be made for one who is the hero of his own story, and a mind never endowed with a very scrupulous regard for facts in a partisan practice of half a century of fierce and reckless party warfare.

I had not, as already stated, during the eventful years of the war, the leisure to correct the errors and misrepresentations which were made by unscrupulous partisans, some of which have been, in ignorance of the facts, incorporated into what purport to be the histories of those times.

This occasion is not inappropriate to bring out the facts in relation to the condition and capture of the navy yard at Norfolk, the policy of the Government, the course which the administration pursued, and the attending circumstances, all of which have been much misrepresented and only imperfectly understood.

At the time of Mr. Lincoln's inauguration, and for several weeks thereafter, he and others indulged the hope of a peaceful solution of the pending question, and a desire, amounting almost to a belief, that Virginia and the other border States might, by forbearance and a calm and conciliatory policy, continue faithful to the Union. Two-thirds of the Convention then in session in Richmond were elected as opponents of secession, and the people of that State were in about that proportion opposed to it. But the Union element, in the Convention and out of it, was passive and acquiescent, while the secessionists were positive, aggressive, and violent; and as is almost always the case in revolutionary times, the aggressors, who continually increased in strength and exactions at the expense of those who were peacefully inclined. It was charged that the new administration was inimical to the South, was hostile to Southern institutions, and would use its power to deprive the people and States of their rights by coercive measures. In order to counteract these unfounded prejudices, and to do away with these misrepresentations, which were embarrassing to the administration, a turbulent and unscrupulous man, who had been a member of Virginia and the convention, and who desired that no step taken which would give offense, and to prevent any cause of irritation, he desired that not even the ordinary local political changes, which are usual on a change of administration, should be made. In regard to the navy yard at Norfolk, he was particularly solicitous that there should be no action taken which would indicate a want of confidence in the authorities and people, or which would be likely to beget distrust. No ships were to be withdrawn from the yard, and no new ones erected. We had reports from that station and from others that there were ardent secessionists among the civil and naval officers, and assurances, on the other hand, that most of them were patriotic and supporters of the Union. It was difficult, then and elsewhere, to distinguish between the true and the disaffected officers of the service. Some had already sent in their resignations; others, it was understood, proposed to do so if any conflict took place between the State and Federal Governments; and there were many who occupied an equivocal and doubtful position. Among those who hesitated to avow themselves on either side, and were undetermined how to act, were officers who subsequently took a firm stand and rendered gallant service in the war which followed.

Commodore McCauley, who was in command of the Norfolk yard, I had personally known in former years, and esteemed as a worthy and estimable officer. His reputation as a Union man in 1861 was good, and all my inquiries in relation to him were satisfactorily answered. His patriotism and fidelity were beyond doubt; but events proved that he was unequal to the position he occupied in the emergency.

Commodore Alden, whom I sent to Norfolk in special duty on the 11th of April, in orders to take command of and bring out the Merrimack, but who was prevented by Commodore McCauley, wrote me the succeeding November, six months after the abandonment of the navy-yard, in regard to Commodore McCauley:—"I believe, indeed I know, that the old hero who has fought so well for his country could have none more true and pure motives in all he did; but he was surrounded by masked traitors whom he did not suspect, and in whose advice he thought there was safety. The cry, 'secede,' and in everybody's mouth, officers and men, and in everybody's eyes, will bring on a collision with the people outside, who are all ready, if anything of the kind is done, to rise up and do us mischief. Besides, Commodore Paulding, whom I accompanied to Norfolk, expressed the idea that if we could not do anything better, we should make a good battery for the defense of the yard. This opinion influenced Commodore McCauley not a little."

If Commodore McCauley had not the activity and energy which were essential to a revolutionary period, he was an old and trusted officer, who had not served out one-third of his term as commandant of the station. To remove him would have necessitated extensive changes, involving an entire reorganization of the government of the yard, and consequently a departure from the President's policy of permitting things to continue undisturbed in Virginia. Whatever negotiations, complications, or correspondence were going forward at that period to insure harmony and peace, though connected more or less with the occurrences here related, need not be now detailed. It is sufficient to say that no military force was ordered to Norfolk; no fortifications were erected for the defense of the navy yard; a passive course was enjoined upon the Navy Department, and the military also, in relation to that station. A large amount of property had been accumulated at the navy yard, and a number of vessels were then in a dismantled condition, without armament or crews. To attempt to refit them or put them in condition to be removed, or to remove the stores, would, it was thought, indicate distrust, and give the secessionists an argument to be used against the administration, accused of a design to subjugate and coerce Virginia.

Not until the last of March did the President fully and finally decide to attempt to relieve Fort Sumter. He never proposed or intended to order it to be evacuated; but certain assurances and commitments which had been made embarrassed him, and a hope that in some way there would be an adjustment of difficulties without a resort to arms caused him to hesitate, and delayed his final decision. The condition of that fort and the garrison had received immediate attention after the inauguration, and the Cabinet was earnest and almost unanimous for its prompt reinforcement. Numerous consultations were held on the subject, to some of which Generals Scott and Totten were invited. The deliberate

and united opinion of these officers was unqualified against any attempt to reinforce or supply the garrison, which they pronounced utterly impracticable, and which, if attempted, would result in a failure, with a waste of blood and treasure.

These arguments, and an elaborate written report which they submitted by order of the President, had an influence on him and several of the members of the Cabinet, who felt that the opinions of military men should have weight on a military question. It is generally known, however, that one of the members of the Cabinet had from the first opposed any attempt to relieve the garrison, and one had been and continued throughout persistent and emphatic in its favor. For some days the President was undetermined what course to take. Delay was moreover important until the Administration could get in working order; but the supplies at Sumter were getting short, and he finally decided, on the 30th of March, that an effort should be made to send supplies to the garrison.

The attempt to relieve Major Anderson, though a military question, was a political necessity. It became a duty of the Government after all conciliatory efforts were exhausted. The expedition to supply the garrison was under the direction of the War Department, in which the navy co-operated. But the whole combined military and naval force of the Government was feeble. March 26th had adjourned on the 15th of March without making any provision for increasing the naval strength, although the danger of a civil war was imminent; no increased appropriations were made. The navy was restricted to a strictly peace establishment, with a force limited by law to eight thousand five hundred men. But five vessels were in commission in all our Atlantic ports. The Navy Department had quietly commenced recruiting, and on the 29th of March Commodore Breece, then in command of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, was ordered to send two hundred and fifty seamen to Norfolk, a vulnerable point if Virginia should attempt to secede. On the next day, however, the 30th of March, the President informed me that he had come to the conclusion that supplies should be sent to Major Anderson, and, if resistance was made, that the garrison should be reinforced. To execute, and, if it became necessary, to enforce his orders, a naval force would be required. As we then had but three naval steamers that were available—two having a few days previous been sent to the Gulf by special request of General Scott—the Harriet Lane, a revenue cutter, was transferred by the Secretary of the Treasury to the navy to form a part of the expedition. The two hundred and fifty seamen on the receiving ship at Brooklyn, whom I had directed on the 29th to be sent to Norfolk, were transferred to the Powhatan, which was to be the flagship of the squadron. The Pocahontas, one of the vessels of the Home Squadron, which I had detained and ordered to Norfolk by way of precaution early in March, was one of the revenue vessels temporarily detached and detailed for the expedition. To supply her place on the 30th of March, the day I received the President's decision, ordered the sloop-of-war Cumberland, then at Hampton Roads, destined for the West Indies, to proceed to Norfolk. The Cumberland was a sailing vessel which could not be made available for the Sumter expedition. She was the flagship of Commodore Pendergrast, who was in command of the Home Squadron, and if it was a satisfaction that so experienced an officer could be associated with Commodore McCauley, with a full crew, in case of an emergency. The President and Secretary of State proposed that Commodore Pendergrast should go to Vera Cruz, in consequence of certain complications in that quarter; but the condition of affairs at home made it advisable that he and his flagship should be detained in the waters of Virginia. With the exception of the Cumberland, the Sumter expedition took from the Navy Department on the 6th of April every available naval vessel.

It was at this culminating period that vessels were ordered to the Chesapeake and on the Potomac; for, in case of a conflict at Charleston, it was uncertain what would be the attitude of Virginia. I felt hopeful, however, that the Cumberland would be adequate for the protection of the yard from any attack by water. The defense by land was a military measure, in which she could also participate, and render efficient assistance, if necessary.

There were many circumstances attending the Sumter expedition which are interwoven with this subject, that are not generally known. As I have said, they belong to the history of those times. Allusion to some of them cannot be wholly omitted in stating the proceedings of the navy and the Navy Department, and the acts of the administration attending the destruction of the navy yard at Norfolk. The men on the receiving ship at Brooklyn, whom Commodore Breece had been directed on the 29th of March to send to Norfolk, were diverted to that expedition and placed on the Powhatan. This important vessel was, by an irregular and most extraordinary proceeding, assigned to the Chesapeake and on the Potomac; for, in case of a conflict at Charleston, it was uncertain what would be the attitude of Virginia. I felt hopeful, however, that the Cumberland would be adequate for the protection of the yard from any attack by water. The defense by land was a military measure, in which she could also participate, and render efficient assistance, if necessary.

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to other stations;" and he was further directed to "keep the department advised of the condition of affairs; of any cause of apprehension, should any exist."

On the 11th of April I directed Commodore Breece to send two hundred men to Norfolk, if that number had been enlisted. Commodore—now Commodore—Alden, the present Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, was ordered on the same day, the 11th, to report to Commodore McCauley, to take charge of the steamer Merrimack, and deliver her over to the commanding officer at Philadelphia. Orders were sent to Commodore McCauley at the same time to have the Merrimack and Plymouth prepared immediately for removal, and that there should be no delay. Mr. Isherwood, Chief of the Bureau of Steam Engineering, was directed on the following day, the 12th, to proceed to Norfolk and give his personal attention to putting the engines of the Merrimack in working condition.

On the 14th of April Fort Sumter was evacuated, and on the 15th President Lincoln issued his proclamation calling for seventy-five thousand troops. On the succeeding day the following letters were sent, respectively, to Commodore McCauley, commanding the navy yard, and to Commodore Pendergrast, commanding the above squadron, by the hands of Commodore Paulding:—

NAVY DEPARTMENT, April 16, 1861.—SIR:—The event which has transpired since your confidential communication to you of the 10th instant imposes additional vigilance and care in protecting the public property in your charge. The Merrimack, vessels and stores, if necessary, beyond jeopardy. Referring to my letter of the 10th, you will continue to carry out the instructions therein contained. The Engineer-in-Chief, B. F. Isherwood, who is detached to Norfolk to aid in putting the Merrimack in condition to be moved, reports that she will be ready to take her departure on Thursday, and it is not necessary, however, that she should leave at that time unless there is immediate danger pending. You will also place the more valuable public property, ordnance stores, etc., on shipboard, so that they can at any moment be moved beyond the reach of seizure. With diligence on your part, it is not anticipated that any sudden demonstration can be made which will endanger either the vessels or stores. The Plymouth and Ben pin should be placed beyond danger of immediate assault, if possible. The Germantown can receive on board the Merrimack from the yard, and be towed out by the Merrimack if an assault is threatened. Men have been ordered from New York to man and assist in moving the vessels; but recent demands have forced me to request you to meet the requisition. Under these circumstances, should it become necessary, Commodore Pendergrast will assist and co-operate with you in carrying the views of the department into effect. As it is difficult at this distance to give instructions in detail, the department has thought proper to detach Commodore Paulding to Norfolk, who will be the bearer of this communication, and explain to yourself and Commodore Pendergrast the views and purposes of the department. You will be pleased to advise with him freely and fully as to your duties and the interests of the Government in the present threatening emergency. The vessels and stores under your charge should be kept in readiness to repelling by force, if necessary, any and all attempts to seize them, whether by mob violence, organized effort, or any assault. I have the honor to be, very respectfully, yours, etc., GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy.

Commodore C. S. McCauley, Norfolk, Virginia. NAVY DEPARTMENT, April 16, 1861.—SIR:—A state of things has arisen which renders the immediate departure of the Cumberland, as originally intended, inexpedient. The Merrimack, in consequence of the threatening attitude of affairs in some parts of our country, call for the exercise of great vigilance and care in protecting the public property in your charge. You have heretofore made to Commodore McCauley on these subjects, which he will submit to you; and Commodore Paulding, who brings this letter to you, will verbally and in detail explain the views of the department. Please to advise freely and fully with both these gentlemen, and co-operate with them in carrying the views of the department into effect. As there is an insufficiency of men in the service at that station for moving the vessels, it is necessary that you should render assistance from the force under your command. Until further orders the departure of the Cumberland to Vera Cruz will be deferred. In the meantime, you will be pleased to advise with me in detail of your command towards putting the vessels now in the yard in condition to be moved, placing the more valuable public property on board for moving, and in case of invasion, insurrection, or violence of any kind, to suppress it, repelling by force, if necessary, any and all attempts to seize them, whether by mob violence, organized effort, or any assault. It is fortunate that the Government is enabled to avail itself of your service and that of your command, at this juncture. I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant, GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy.

Commodore Paulding was at that time attached to the Navy Department as its detailing officer; and lest there should be some misapprehension, neglect, or wrong, I gave him verbal orders to go to Norfolk, personally inspect the condition of the navy yard, satisfy himself of the fidelity and vigilance of the officers and men, and to consult and advise at his discretion with Commodore McCauley and Pendergrast. Many of the most important orders given, and the instructions for great fidelity pervaded the departments. Confidence was impaired, distrust prevailed, and, when treachery was so extended and deep, penetrating every branch of the Government, extreme caution became necessary in regard to every movement.

Commodore McCauley wrote to me on the 16th that the Merrimack would probably be ready for temporary service on the evening of the next day. Commodore Paulding returned on the 17th, and made a favorable report of affairs, of the fidelity and Union feeling of the officers in command; said that the engines of the Merrimack were in order, and she would leave on the following day. But Chief Engineer Isherwood returned to Washington the next morning, the 18th, and reported that Commodore McCauley had refused to permit the Merrimack to depart after her engines were in order and men to move her were on board, and had directed the fires that were kindled to be drawn.

Immediately on receiving this report I went with the President to General Scott to procure a competent military officer, and, if possible, a military force, for the more defenses of the navy yard. Information had reached us that the convention at Richmond had yielded to secession. We also heard of the rapid rising of the insurgents, and of their intention to seize at once Harper's Ferry, the navy yard at Norfolk, and Fortress Monroe, not one of which had a proper military support. There were no fortifications whatever to defend the navy yard from the insurgents, no military force was there, and the expectation that the Cumberland and the small number of sailors in the Command were temporarily held the yard until military assistance could arrive was shaken by the intelligence that morning received, and the further fact that vessels were being sunk to obstruct the channel. General Scott, on our application for military aid, said we were asking an impossibility. He assured us he had no troops to send for the defense of the navy yard, and that it was not susceptible of defense if he had them; that any men sent might order there would almost certainly be captured; that it was enemy's country, without fortifications or batteries for them to occupy; that seamen and marines who might be on shipboard for water defense could perhaps do something towards protecting the public property, and escape if overwhelmed, provided the obstructions which we heard were being sunk in the channel did not prevent, but

There were many circumstances attending the Sumter expedition which are interwoven with this subject, that are not generally known. As I have said, they belong to the history of those times. Allusion to some of them cannot be wholly omitted in stating the proceedings of the navy and the Navy Department, and the acts of the administration attending the destruction of the navy yard at Norfolk. The men on the receiving ship at Brooklyn, whom Commodore Breece had been directed on the 29th of March to send to Norfolk, were diverted to that expedition and placed on the Powhatan. This important vessel was, by an irregular and most extraordinary proceeding, assigned to the Chesapeake and on the Potomac; for, in case of a conflict at Charleston, it was uncertain what would be the attitude of Virginia. I felt hopeful, however, that the Cumberland would be adequate for the protection of the yard from any attack by water. The defense by land was a military measure, in which she could also participate, and render efficient assistance, if necessary.

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There could be no escape for soldiers. The General stated, with a heavy heart, that he had no troops to spare for the defense of Harper's Ferry, and that the arms and stores at that place must inevitably be lost.

The garrison at Fortress Monroe was, he feared, insufficient to repel the force which was understood was organizing to attack it. He had not, he said, men sufficient to protect Washington if a formidable demonstration was made. At length he promised to send Colonel Deland, Chief of the Engineer Corps, and I think consented, before the Pawnee left, that a battalion of the Massachusetts volunteers, raised under the proclamation of the 15th, might accompany Commodore Paulding, provided they had reached Hampton Roads. They were, he said, undisciplined—would be good for nothing as yet for serious fighting, but would be serviceable in throwing up batteries under the direction of the engineer. For the present, his first great duty, with his feeble force, was to defend Washington, and next to Washington, Fortress Monroe, which was the key to Washington, Norfolk, Baltimore, Chesapeake Bay, and the rivers which entered it. He therefore could not, and would not, consent to part with a single regular for either Harper's Ferry or the Norfolk Navy Yard; and his opinion frankly expressed to us was that the public property in each of those places must, in case of an attack, be sacrificed, and that could be done so as to prevent the vessels and stores from passing into the hands of the insurgents.

Harper's Ferry was abandoned that evening. As but little assistance could be derived from the military, I lost not a moment, after parting from the President and General Scott, in giving the following order to Commodore Paulding:—

NAVY DEPARTMENT, April 18, 1861.—SIR:—You are directed to proceed forthwith to Norfolk and take command of all the naval forces in your charge, and the means placed at your command, you will do all in your power to protect and place beyond danger the vessels and property belonging to the United States. On no account should the arms and munitions be permitted to fall into the hands of the insurgents, or those who are in possession of the custody of the Government; and, should it finally become necessary, you will, in order to prevent their destruction, destroy the property. In carrying out these orders, you will be pleased to advise with me freely and fully as to your duties and the interests of the Government in the present threatening emergency. The vessels and stores under your charge should be kept in readiness to repelling by force, if necessary, any and all attempts to seize them, whether by mob violence, organized effort, or any assault. I have the honor to be, very respectfully, yours, etc., GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy.